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SUBJECT: GOING TO TAIWAN: SURINAMESE PARLIMENTARY VISIT  
STIRS CHINESE IRE

REF: A. 2007 PARAMARIBO 297

- [¶](#)B. 2007 PARAMARIBO 172
- [¶](#)C. 2006 PARAMARIBO 698
- [¶](#)D. 2006 PARAMARIBO 286
- [¶](#)E. 2006 PARAMARIBO 431

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This cable is the fourth in a series on Chinese and Taiwanese activities in Suriname in the spring of 2007.

[¶](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: In the latest attempt by the Government of Taiwan (GOT) to butter up the Surinamese for eventual diplomatic recognition (ref A), several parliamentarians from the Government of Suriname (GOS) were invited to Taiwan for a "familiarization" visit. The Deputy Speaker of Parliament says he will attend, not in his political capacity, but on his "personal title," and looks to be joined by representatives from two other coalition parties. In reaction, the Government of China (GOC) summoned the GOS Ambassador in Beijing for an explanation of how this affects the GOS stance on the "One-China Policy," and dispatched emissaries in Paramaribo to voice disapproval. Minister of Foreign Affairs Lygia Kraag-Keteldijk spoke publicly in favor of the Chinese line, asking for a "political solution" from her coalition. However, other prominent Surinamers, including Speaker of Parliament Paul Somohardjo, spoke out angrily on what they see as bullying by the GOC. Despite scoring a public relations victory, it may be for naught for the GOT: the largest coalition partners remain staunch supporters of the GOC, and the opposition has begun to show signs that it is as well. The heavy-handed reaction of the GOC has again shown the importance Beijing places on Suriname. END SUMMARY

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Come Recognize the Beauty of Taiwan  
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[¶](#)2. (U) At the very moment that Surinamese Vice President Ram Sardjoe was sending out press releases from China claiming success for his courtesy call there, on June 16 Taiwan struck back by inviting a delegation of prominent Surinamers to visit on a familiarization trip. The GOT invited select business, union, press, and political figures to visit between July 16-20 and "get to know the diverse aspects of Taiwan, including the culture, nature, the economy, the democratic order, and the charm of the lovely island" ... and, of course, to meet the Foreign Minister.

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Coalition Parties Disagree, Waffle  
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¶13. (SBU) Parliamentarians from three of the seven coalition parties went back and forth in the press as to whether to participate. The most prominent to still say he is going is Deputy Speaker Caprino Alendy, despite internal criticism from within his strife-ridden (ref B) coalition grouping, A-Combination. Fellow A-Combination parliamentarian and rival Ronny Brunswijk said there is no such thing as traveling on "personal title" for members of parliament. Meanwhile, fellow coalition party and longtime China-skeptic (ref C) Democratic Alternative ,91 (DA ,91) is sending as-yet unnamed "representatives." Opportunistic coalition member/nuisance, Pertjaja Luhur (ref D), remains undecided as to whether its participation will be at the parliamentary level or not.

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Beijing Displeasure Plays as Heavy-Handed  
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¶14. (SBU) In Beijing, GOS Ambassador Isaak Soerokarso was summoned to explain the incident, while officials from the GOC Embassy in Suriname visited the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to express disappointment. As usual, GOC allies in the GOS reacted swiftly to Chinese prompting. Foreign Minister Lygia Kraag-Keteldijk told the press "we are bringing upon ourselves great embarrassment with this question internationally," and called for a "political solution." As usual, she repeated GOS support for the "One-China Policy." Others were not as malleable. Speaker of Parliament Paul Somohardjo, who cut short a business trip to Germany to return to discuss the question internally, said the GOC is "making a mistake," and said he found the GOC behavior pushy. He appeared to reverse the party's decision not to send parliamentarian Hendrik Sakimin, saying the party

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has to look into it. Somohardjo was not alone in his disapproval of the GOC reaction. DA'91 said no ambassador should be allowed to say with whom Suriname may have ties. Voices in the media called the GOC behavior everything from "unacceptable" to "a grave violation of our integrity," and former Speaker of Parliament Emile Wijntuin wrote a letter to the editor whose headline asked, "Is Suriname on the Way to Becoming a Colony of China?" When asked about the brouhaha in the local press during the U.S. Embassy 4th of July event, Chinese Ambassador Su Ge shrugged it off, quoting a GOS MFA official who told him, "it's more noise than news." Su lamented it's too bad that people are trying to sow seeds of conflict, since Taiwan is "just a province of China."

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Opposition Interest Nuanced  
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¶14. (SBU) While the original announcement of the visit claimed opposition politicians would participate, few opposition names have subsequently surfaced, and with minimal public discussion. Opposition parliamentarian Hariette Ramdien of the People,s Alliance for Progress (VVV) told EmbOffs her party will in fact send two representatives, but also said her party and the opposition in general will continue to support a One-China Policy. Another source told post the VVV will send one of its parliamentarians. Meanwhile, the National Democratic Party, Suriname,s largest party, led by former military strongman Desi Bouterse, has been silent on the issue, but press reports indicate former NDP presidential candidate Rashied Doekhie will attend on behalf of the party. The NDP is in a poor position to oppose the One-China Policy, which it supported when it held the Presidency under Jules Wijdenbosch in the late 1990,s. Wijdenbosch,s government also inaugurated the Surinamese trend to bring in large Chinese companies when it contracted

with Dalian on a road building project. For their part, the Chinese have also been more forgiving of Bouterse than other bilateral actors in the past (ref E).

¶6. (SBU) COMMENT: Taiwan's activities in Suriname are clearly driving the Chinese to distraction, and this latest round seems to have been "won" by the Taiwanese: the Chinese made themselves look bad with their heavy-handed overreaction, and the failure of China's allies in the government to put an end to coalition participation in the trip to Taiwan indicates that support for the One-China Policy in Suriname is less cut-and-dried than the GOC would wish. However, Post cannot envision a scenario through which this or any subsequent GOS would recognize Taiwan. The coalition parties who have played up to Taiwan are mostly small, and do not have the clout or the interest to force a change within the coalition. Opposition disinterest further damages Taiwanese hopes. Unlike China, Taiwan has not been able to attract powerful allies--its friends are mostly marginal players or outsiders. Finally, while the press has shown great displeasure with GOC pressure, there has also been a steady stream of articles indicating preference for, as one analyst put it, the "giant" China over the "dwarf" Taiwan, and a general disapproval over their unseemly competition. What is most interesting about the continued fracas is the importance "giant" China continues to place on tiny, perceived-backwater Suriname. Often dismissed as insignificant in international politics, this neglected stretch of resource-rich virgin rainforest run by opportunistic politicians has great interest for Beijing.

END COMMENT

SCHREIBER HUGHES